

REMARKS

In the non-final Office Action, the Examiner rejects claims 11, 27, and 30 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite; rejects claims 11-20 and 27-30 under 35 U.S.C. § 101 as being directed to non-statutory subject matter; rejects claims 1-20 and 27-30 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by U.S. Patent Application 2003/0004914 (McGreevy); and rejects claims 21-26 and 31 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent Application 2003/0233618 (Wan) in view of McGreevy. The rejections are respectfully traversed.¹

By this Amendment, Applicants amend claims 1, 11, 13, 21, 22, 24, 26, 27, 30, and 31 to improve form. No new matter has been introduced. Claims 1-31 are pending.

*Rejection of Claims under
35 U.S.C. § 112, 2nd Paragraph*

Claims 11, 27, and 30 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as allegedly indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicants regard as the invention. In particular, the Examiner asserts that the phrase “do not substantially affect” renders the claims indefinite as including element not actually disclosed and thereby rendering the scope of the claims ascertainable (Office Action, p. 2). The rejection is respectfully traversed.

Without acquiescing in the Examiner's rejection, but solely to expedite prosecution, claims 11, 27, and 30 are amended to delete the phrase identified by the

¹ As Applicants' remarks with respect to the Examiner's rejections overcome the rejections, Applicants' silence as to certain assertions by the Examiner in the Office Action or certain requirements that may be applicable to such rejections (e.g., whether a reference constitutes prior art, motivation to combine references, assertions as to dependent claims, etc.) is not a concession by Applicants that such assertions

Examiner. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of claims 11, 27, and 30 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph.

*Rejection of Claims 11-20 and 27-30
under 35 U.S.C. § 101*

Claims 11-20 and 27-30 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 101 as allegedly directed to non-statutory subject matter. In particular, the Examiner asserts that claims 11, 27, and 30 respectively represent "a method, a device, and a program of the claimed invention for identifying stopwords in a query, retrieving context data and rewriting a query to remove stopwords. However, the method, device and program each individually does not removing [sic] stopwords" (Office Action, pp. 3-4). Applicants respectfully disagree and submit that claims 11-20 and 27-30 are directed to statutory subject matter.

For purposes of a 35 U.S.C. § 101 analysis, "it is of little relevance whether the claim is directed to a machine or process." AT&T Corp. v. Excel Communications, Inc., 172 F.3d 1352, 1357, 50 USPQ2d 1447, 1451 (Fed. Cir. 1999). See also M.P.E.P. § 2106 IV.B.2. A claim qualifies as statutory subject matter when it involves a "practical application within the technological arts." AT&T at 1358. A claim is limited to a practical application when the process, apparatus or system, as claimed, "produces a concrete, tangible and useful result." Id. In determining whether a claim is for a "practical application," the "focus is not on whether the steps taken to achieve a particular result are useful, tangible, and concrete, but rather that the final result achieved by the claims invention is 'useful, tangible, and concrete'." Interim Guidelines for Examination

are accurate or that such requirements have been met, and Applicants reserve the right to dispute these assertions/requirements in the future.

of Patent Applications for Patent Subject Matter Eligibility, 1300 OG 142, § IV. C. 2. b., November 22, 2005. Applicants respectfully submit that the final result achieved by each of claims 1-21 and 23-27 is "useful, tangible, and concrete" and, thus, does involve a "practical application within the technological arts."

The Examiner appears to assert that claim 11 recites steps that are "abstract because no concrete, useful or tangible result ensued by performing the steps" (Office Action, p. 3). To achieve a "tangible result," a claim must produce a "real-world result" that has a "beneficial result or effect." Interim Guidelines, at § IV.C.2.b(2). The "tangible" requirement "does not necessarily mean that a claim must either be tied to a particular machine or apparatus or must operate to change articles or materials to a different state or thing." Id.

The process recited in claim 11, and its dependent claims 12-20, identifies potential stopwords in a query. Claim 11, as amended, further recites designating, as actual stopwords, those of the potential stopwords that do not meaningfully contribute to the generation of context data. Claim 11 further recites rewriting the query to remove one or more of the actual stopwords from the query. Applicants submit that modifying a query in this manner is a real-world result that is tangible. Applicants, therefore, submit that the result achieved by claim 11 is a beneficial, real-world result (see, for example, para. 62 of the Applicants' specification). Accordingly, contrary to the Examiner's assertions, claim 11, and its dependent claims (i.e., 12-20) produce a "tangible result."

With respect to claim 27, The Examiner appears to assert that claim 27 does not recite "hardware or means for supporting performing the steps" (Office Action, p. 3).

The Examiner's assertion notwithstanding, 35 U.S.C. § 112, sixth paragraph provides:

An element in a claim for a combination may be expressed as a means or step for performing a specified function without the recital of structure, material, or acts in support thereof, and such claim shall be construed to cover the corresponding structure, material, or acts described in the specification and equivalents thereof.

(emphasis added). Accordingly, the rejection of claim 27 and its dependent claims (i.e., 28 and 29) under 35 U.S.C. § 101 is clearly improper because it is written in means plus function format and should be construed to cover the corresponding structure in the specification and its equivalents thereof.

With respect to claim 30, the Examiner asserts that claim 30 recites a computer-readable medium" that includes signals and waves that are not "a matter, composition of matter or product; and do not fall within any one of categories of patentable subject matter" (Office Action, pp. 3-4). Without acquiescing in the Examiner's rejection, but solely to expedite prosecution, claim 30 is amended to recite a "computer-readable storage medium."

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of claims 11-20 and 27-30 under 35 U.S.C. § 101.

*Rejection of Claims 1-20 and 27-30
under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) based on McGreevy*

Claims 1-20 and 27-30 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as allegedly anticipated by McGreevy. The rejection is respectfully traversed.

A proper rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 102 requires that a single reference teach every aspect of the claimed invention. Any feature not directly taught must be inherently present. In other words, the identical invention must be shown in as complete detail as contained in the claim. See M.P.E.P. § 2131. McGreevy does not disclose or suggest the combination of features recited in claims 1-20 and 27-30.

Amended claim 1 is directed to a method of detecting stopwords in a query. The method includes identifying a potential stopword in the query based on a comparison to a list of stopwords; generating a plurality of sets of context data based on the query and the potential stopword; comparing the sets of context data; and classifying the potential stopword either as an actual stopword or as being material to the query based on the comparing. This combination of features is not disclosed or suggested by McGreevy.

For example, McGreevy does not disclose or suggest a method of detecting stopwords in a query that includes classifying a potential stopword either as an actual stopword or as being material to the query based on a comparing of generated sets of context data, as required by claim 1. The Examiner alleges that McGreevy discloses similar features, citing Figs. 12 and 13, and paragraphs 198 and 202 of McGreevy for support (Office Action, p. 5). Applicants respectfully disagree with the Examiner's interpretation of McGreevy.

Fig. 12 of McGreevy depicts a process 1200 in which the query includes a number of query fields. A relational model of the contents of each one of the query fields is created in block 1202, and in block 1204, the models of query fields are combined

(para. 194). Fig. 13 of McGreevy depicts a method 1204 of combining the query field models. With respect to Fig. 13, McGreevy discloses:

A first relation from a first one of the query field models is selected in block 1302. A query model is initialized as being empty in block 1304. Then the term pair from the selected query model is compared to the relations in the query model in block 1306. If the term pair is not already in a relation in the query model, then the selected relation is included in the query model in block 1310. If the term pair is already included in one of the relations of the query model, then the order of the term pair in the selected relation and the order of the term pair in the query model are compared in block 1312. If the order is not the same, then the order of the term pair in the selected relation is reversed in block 1314 and the directional metrics recalculated in block 1316, i.e. the value of LCM and the value of RCM of the selected relation are exchanged. Once the order of the term pair in the selected relation and the order of the term pair in the query model are the same, then each of the corresponding types of relational metrics of the relation in the query model and the selected relation is combined in a summation of each type and the summation results replace the previous values of the corresponding types of metrics in the relation in the query model in block 1318. This process continues through the remainder of the relations in the selected query field model in blocks 1320, 1322. Once all relations of the first query field model have been processed then a subsequent query field model is selected in block 1324 and a first relation from the subsequent query field model is selected in block 1326 and this query field model is processed in blocks 1306-1322. Once all of the query field models have been processed, then the resulting query model is output in block 1328.

(para. 194). This section of McGreevy discloses successively processing “relations” of all the query field models using term pair selection and comparison, and outputting the resulting query model. Nowhere in connection with Figs. 12 and 13, or elsewhere, does McGreevy disclose or suggest a method of detecting stopwords in a query that includes classifying a potential stopword either as an actual stopword or as being material to the query based on a comparing of generated sets of context data, as required by claim 1.

At paragraph 198, McGreevy discloses:

In phrase search, a query model can be modified as a function of the stopterms in the query. Recall that each query model contains relations, and each relation contains a term pair and associated relational summation metrics (RSMs). When a query model is created based on a query such as "on approach to the runway", that query model can include query model term pairs such as "on, approach", "on, to", "approach, runway", as well as others. One alternative is to eliminate all relations containing stopterms. As another alternative, stopterms can be retained and treated just like any other term. In yet another alternative, relations containing one or more stopterms can be differentiated from others. For example, in order to adjust the weight of each relation to favor topical term pairs such as "approach, runway" over terms [sic] pairs containing one stopterm such as "the, runway", and term pairs containing two stopterms such as "on, to", it is possible to modify the metrics of each relation as a function of the stopterms contained in the term pairs.

This section of McGreevy discloses a phrase search methodology in which a query model can be modified as a function of the stopterms in the query by: 1) eliminating all relations containing stopterms; 2) treating the stopterms as any other term; or 3) modifying the metrics of each relation as a function of the stopterms contained in the term pairs, i.e., weighting term pairs differently based on the stopterm(s). Nowhere in this section, or elsewhere, does McGreevy disclose or suggest a method of detecting stopwords in a query that includes classifying a potential stopword either as an actual stopword or as being material to the query based on a comparing of generated sets of context data, as required by claim 1.

At paragraph 202, McGreevy discloses:

Another alternative embodiment includes a list of stop relations. A stop relation is a relation that does not necessarily include stopterms but is treated similarly to a stopterm in that stop relations may be excluded, or given more or less relevance weighting, etc., as described above for stopterms. Each one of the stop relations includes a first term and a second term and a number of types of relational metrics. For one embodiment, any stop relations in the relational model of the query are eliminated from the query. Eliminating a stop relation blocks the

collection of the related concepts described by the stop relation. For example, returning to the fatigue example described above, a stop relation might include the term pair "fatigue" and "metal". Eliminating the "fatigue, metal" stop relation from the model of the query results in removing that contextual association from consideration as a relevant feature.

This section of McGreevy discloses a phrase search methodology that includes a list of stop relations, where a stop relation is a relation that does not necessarily include stopterms, but is treated similarly to a stopterm in that stop relations may be excluded, or given more or less relevance weighting, etc., as with stopterms. Each one of the stop relations includes a first term and a second term and a number of types of relational metrics. Nowhere in this section, or elsewhere, does McGreevy disclose or suggest a method of detecting stopwords in a query that includes classifying a potential stopword either either as an actual stopword or as being material to the query based on a comparing of generated sets of context data, as required by claim 1.

To the contrary, McGreevy in no way relates to a method of detecting stopwords in a query, much less disclose or suggest classifying a potential stopword as an actual stopword or as being material to the query based on a comparing of generated sets of context data, as required by claim 1. Instead, McGreevy appears to disclose that if a particular term is included in a list of stopterms/stop relations, it is a stopterm, otherwise it is not. McGreevy further discloses that the user can add terms to or remove term from the list of stopterms (para. 196).

For at least these reasons, claim 1 is not anticipated by McGreevy. Claims 2-10 depend from claim 1 and are, therefore, not anticipated by McGreevy for at least the reasons give with respect to claim 1.

Independent claim 11, as amended, is directed to a method that includes identifying potential stopwords in a query; generating context data based on the query and the potential stopwords; designating, as actual stopwords, those of the potential stopwords that do not meaningfully contribute to the generation of the context data; and rewriting the query to remove one or more of the actual stopwords. This combination of features is not disclosed or suggested by McGreevy.

For example, McGreevy does not disclose or suggest designating, as actual stopwords, those of the potential stopwords that do not meaningfully contribute to the generation of the context data. The Examiner alleges that McGreevy discloses similar features, citing paragraphs 198 and 202 of McGreevy for support (Office Action, p. 6; Applicants assume the Examiner meant McGreevy instead of Wan, as indicated). Applicants respectfully disagree with the Examiner's interpretation of McGreevy.

Paragraph 198 of McGreevy is reproduced above. This section of McGreevy discloses a phrase search methodology in which a query model can be modified as a function of the stopterms in the query by: 1) eliminating all relations containing stopterms; 2) treating the stopterms as any other term; or 3) modifying the metrics of each relation as a function of the stopterms contained in the term pairs, i.e., weighting term pairs differently based on the stopterm(s). Nowhere in this section, or elsewhere, does McGreevy disclose or suggest designating, as actual stopwords, those of the potential stopwords that do not meaningfully contribute to the generation of the context data, as recited in claim 11.

Paragraph 202 of McGreevy is reproduced above. This section of McGreevy discloses a phrase search methodology that includes a list of stop relations, where a stop relation is a relation that does not necessarily include stopterms, but is treated similarly to a stopterm in that stop relations may be excluded, or given more or less relevance weighting, etc., as with stopterms. Each one of the stop relations includes a first term and a second term and a number of types of relational metrics. Nowhere in this section, or elsewhere, does McGreevy disclose or suggest designating, as actual stopwords, those of the potential stopwords that do not meaningfully contribute to the generation of the context data, as recited in claim 11.

For at least these reasons, claim 11 is not anticipated by McGreevy. Claims 12-20 depend from claim 11 and are, therefore, not anticipated by McGreevy for at least the reasons give with respect to claim 11.

Independent claim 27, as amended, is directed to a device that includes means for identifying potential stopwords in a query, wherein the potential stopwords include at least one actual stopword; means for generating context data based on the query and the potential stopwords; means for detecting the at least one actual stopword based on whether the one or more of the potential stopwords meaningfully contributes to the generation of the context data; and means for rewriting the query to remove the at least one actual stopword. This combination of features is not disclosed or suggested by McGreevy.

For example, McGreevy does not disclose or suggest means for detecting the at least one actual stopword based on whether the one or more of the potential stopwords

meaningfully contributes to the generation of the context data, as recited in claim 27.

The Examiner alleges that McGreevy discloses similar features, citing paragraphs 198 and 202 of McGreevy for support (Office Action, p. 6; Applicants assume the Examiner meant McGreevy instead of Wan, as indicated). Applicants respectfully disagree with the Examiner's interpretation of McGreevy.

Paragraph 198 of McGreevy is reproduced above. This section of McGreevy discloses a phrase search methodology in which a query model can be modified as a function of the stopterms in the query by: 1) eliminating all relations containing stopterms; 2) treating the stopterms as any other term; or 3) modifying the metrics of each relation as a function of the stopterms contained in the term pairs, i.e., weighting term pairs differently based on the stopterm(s). Nowhere in this section, or elsewhere, does McGreevy disclose or suggest means for detecting the at least one actual stopword based on whether the one or more of the potential stopwords meaningfully contributes to the generation of the context data, as recited in claim 27.

Paragraph 202 of McGreevy is reproduced above. This section of McGreevy discloses a phrase search methodology that includes a list of stop relations, where a stop relation is a relation that does not necessarily include stopterms, but is treated similarly to a stopterm in that stop relations may be excluded, or given more or less relevance weighting, etc., as with stopterms. Each one of the stop relations includes a first term and a second term and a number of types of relational metrics. Nowhere in this section, or elsewhere, does McGreevy disclose or suggest means for detecting the at least one actual

stopword based on whether the one or more of the potential stopwords meaningfully contributes to the generation of the context data, as recited in claim 27.

For at least these reasons, claim 27 is not anticipated by McGreevy. Claims 28 and 29 depend from claim 27 and are, therefore, not anticipated by McGreevy for at least the reasons given with respect to claim 27.

Independent claim 30, as amended, is directed to a computer-readable storage medium containing instructions for causing a processor to perform a method. The computer-readable storage medium includes instructions for identifying potential stopwords in a query; instructions for retrieving context data based on the query and the potential stopwords; instructions for classifying those of the potential stopwords that do not meaningfully contribute to the retrieving of the context data as actual stopwords and others of the potential stopwords that meaningfully contribute to the retrieving of the context data as being material to the query; and instructions for rewriting the query to remove the actual stopwords. This combination of features is not disclosed or suggested by McGreevy.

For example, McGreevy does not disclose or suggest instructions for classifying those of the potential stopwords that do not meaningfully contribute to the retrieving of the context data as actual stopwords and others of the potential stopwords that meaningfully contribute to the retrieving of the context data as being material to the query, as recited in claim 30. The Examiner alleges that McGreevy discloses similar features, citing paragraphs 198 and 202 of McGreevy for support (Office Action, p. 6;

Applicants assume the Examiner meant McGreevy instead of Wan, as indicated).

Applicants respectfully disagree with the Examiner's interpretation of McGreevy.

Paragraph 198 of McGreevy is reproduced above. This section of McGreevy discloses a phrase search methodology in which a query model can be modified as a function of the stopterms in the query by: 1) eliminating all relations containing stopterms; 2) treating the stopterms as any other term; or 3) modifying the metrics of each relation as a function of the stopterms contained in the term pairs, i.e., weighting term pairs differently based on the stopterm(s). Nowhere in this section, or elsewhere, does McGreevy disclose or suggest instructions for classifying those of the potential stopwords that do not meaningfully contribute to the retrieving of the context data as actual stopwords and others of the potential stopwords that meaningfully contribute to the retrieving of the context data as being material to the query, as recited in claim 30.

Paragraph 202 of McGreevy is reproduced above. This section of McGreevy discloses a phrase search methodology that includes a list of stop relations, where a stop relation is a relation that does not necessarily include stopterms, but is treated similarly to a stopterm in that stop relations may be excluded, or given more or less relevance weighting, etc., as with stopterms. Each one of the stop relations includes a first term and a second term and a number of types of relational metrics. Nowhere in this section, or elsewhere, does McGreevy disclose or suggest instructions for classifying those of the potential stopwords that do not meaningfully contribute to the retrieving of the context data as actual stopwords and others of the potential stopwords that meaningfully

contribute to the retrieving of the context data as being material to the query, as recited in claim 30.

For at least these reasons, claim 30 is not anticipated by McGreevy.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of claims 1-20 and 27-30 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) based on McGreevy.

*Rejection of Claims 21-26 and 31
under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) based on Wan and McGreevy*

Claims 21-26 and 31 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Wan in view of McGreevy. The rejection is respectfully traversed.

Independent claim 21, as amended, is directed to a system that includes a parser component configured to receive a search query and identify potential stopwords in the search query; a context generation component to generate context data based on the search query and the potential stopwords; and a comparator component to compare the context data to determine those of the potential stopwords that effected generation of context data that is not substantially similar to context data unassociated with those potential stopwords. This combination of features is not disclosed or suggested by Wan and McGreevy, whether taken alone, or in any reasonable combination.

For example, Wan and McGreevy, whether taken alone, or in any reasonable combination, do not disclose or suggest a comparator component to compare the context data to determine those of the potential stopwords that effected generation of context data that is not substantially similar to context data unassociated with those potential stopwords, as recited in claim 21. The Examiner alleges that McGreevy discloses similar features, citing Figs. 12 and 13, and paragraphs 194-198 of McGreevy for support (Office

Action, p. 18). Applicants respectfully disagree with the Examiner's interpretation of McGreevy.

Fig. 12 of McGreevy depicts a process 1200 in which the query includes a number of query fields. A relational model of the contents of each one of the query fields is created in block 1202, and in block 1204, the models of query fields are combined (para. 194). Fig. 13 of McGreevy depicts a method 1204 of combining the query field models. In connection with Fig. 13, McGreevy discloses successively processing "relations" of all the query field models using term pair selection and comparison, and outputting the resulting query model. Nowhere in connection with Figs. 12 and 13, or elsewhere, does McGreevy disclose or suggest a comparator component to compare the context data to determine those of the potential stopwords that effected generation of context data that is not substantially similar to context data unassociated with those potential stopwords, as recited in claim 21.

Paragraph 194 of McGreevy is reproduced above. This section of McGreevy discloses successively processing "relations" of all the query field models using term pair selection and comparison, and outputting the resulting query model. Nowhere in this section, or elsewhere, does McGreevy disclose or suggest a comparator component to compare the context data to determine those of the potential stopwords that effected generation of context data that is not substantially similar to context data unassociated with those potential stopwords, as recited in claim 21.

At paragraphs 195-197, McGreevy discloses:

Inputting the query can also include assigning a weight to at least one of the query fields. Each one of the RSMs corresponding to the

selected query field is scaled by a factor determined by the assigned weight. This allows each query field to be given an importance value relative to the other query fields.

Stopterms play an important role in phrase search because some queries will contain one or more stopterms. Stopterms can include any terms, but in one alternative, stopterms include words such as "a", "an", "the", "of", "to", and "on". In phrase search, the user can add terms to, or remove terms from, the list of stopterms.

In one alternative of phrase search, a search finds subsets that contain a particular phrase that includes particular stopterms, such as "on approach to the runway". In another alternative of phrase search, stopterms are ignored and a search finds subsets containing phrases whose non-stopterms match the query phrase or phrases. For example, in the query "We were on approach to the runway at LAX" the words "we", "were", "on", "to", "the", and "at" could, if the user so indicated, be considered to be stopterms, and the query would match subsets containing sequences such as "He was on approach to runway 25L, a mile from LAX". In another embodiment, a query "on approach to the runway" matches all occurrences in subsets of "on approach to the runway" as well as similar phrases in subsets such as "on approach to runway 25R". Preferably the exact matches are listed first in the output.

These sections of McGreevy disclose that in phrase search, some queries contain a stopterm(s) and the user can add terms to or remove term from the list of stopterms. In a phrase search, a search finds subsets that contain a particular phrase that includes particular stopterms, or alternatively, stopterms are ignored and a search finds subsets containing phrases whose non-stopterms match the query phrase or phrases. Nowhere in these sections, or elsewhere, does McGreevy disclose or suggest a comparator component to compare the context data to determine those of the potential stopwords that effected generation of context data that is not substantially similar to context data unassociated with those potential stopwords, as recited in claim 21.

Paragraph 198 of McGreevy is reproduced above. This section of McGreevy discloses a phrase search methodology in which a query model can be modified as a

function of the stopterms in the query by: 1) eliminating all relations containing stopterms; 2) treating the stopterms as any other term; or 3) modifying the metrics of each relation as a function of the stopterms contained in the term pairs, i.e., weighting term pairs differently based on the stopterm(s). Nowhere in this section, or elsewhere, does McGreevy disclose or suggest a comparator component to compare the context data to determine those of the potential stopwords that effected generation of context data that is not substantially similar to context data unassociated with those potential stopwords, as recited in claim 21. Wan also fails to disclose or suggest this feature.

For at least these reasons, claim 21 is patentable over Wan and McGreevy, whether taken alone, or in any reasonable combination. Claims 22-26 depend from claim 21 and are, therefore, patentable over Wan and McGreevy, whether taken alone, or in any reasonable combination for at least the reasons given with respect to claim 21.

Independent claim 31, as amended, is directed to a document retrieval system that includes a search engine and a stopword detection component to rewrite a search query. The search engine being configured to receive a user search query, receive rewritten versions of the search query that exclude stopwords not material to an intended result of the search query, and perform a search of a document index based on the rewritten versions of the search query. The stopword detection component including a parser component configured to receive the user search query and identify potential stopwords in the search query; a context generation component to generate context data based on the search query and the potential stopwords; and a comparator component to compare the context data to determine those of the potential stopwords that meaningfully contribute to

the context data and classify those potential stopwords as non-stopwords to be included in at least one of the rewritten versions of the search query. This combination of features is not disclosed or suggested by Wan and McGreevy, whether taken alone, or in any reasonable combination.

For example, Wan and McGreevy, whether taken alone, or in any reasonable combination, do not disclose or suggest a comparator component to compare the context data to determine those of the potential stopwords that meaningfully contribute to the context data and classify those potential stopwords as non-stopwords to be included in at least one of the rewritten versions of the search query, as recited in claim 31. The Examiner alleges that McGreevy discloses similar features, citing paragraphs 198 and 202 of McGreevy for support (Office Action, p. 6; Applicants assume the Examiner meant McGreevy instead of Wan, as indicated). Applicants respectfully disagree with the Examiner's interpretation of McGreevy.

Paragraph 198 of McGreevy is reproduced above. This section of McGreevy discloses a phrase search methodology in which a query model can be modified as a function of the stopterms in the query by: 1) eliminating all relations containing stopterms; 2) treating the stopterms as any other term; or 3) modifying the metrics of each relation as a function of the stopterms contained in the term pairs, i.e., weighting term pairs differently based on the stopterm(s). Nowhere in this section, or elsewhere, does McGreevy disclose or suggest a comparator component to compare the context data to determine those of the potential stopwords that meaningfully contribute to the context

data and classify those potential stopwords as non-stopwords to be included in at least one of the rewritten versions of the search query, as recited in claim 31.

For at least these reasons, claim 31 is patentable over Wan and McGreevy, whether taken alone, or in any reasonable combination.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of claims 21-26 and 31 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) based on Wan and McGreevy.

CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully request the Examiner's reconsideration of the application and the timely allowance of the pending claims.

While the present application is now believed to be in condition for allowance, should the Examiner find some issue to remain unresolved, or should any new issues arise which could be eliminated through discussions with Applicants' representative, then the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned by telephone in order that the further prosecution of this application can thereby be expedited.

To the extent necessary, a petition for an extension of time under 37 C.F.R. § 1.136 is hereby made. Please charge any shortage in fees due in connection with the filing of this paper, including extension of time fees, to Deposit Account No. 50-1070 and please credit any excess fees to such deposit account.

Respectfully submitted,

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